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ABSTRACT

This report assesses the threat posed to Nigerian national culture by foreign cultural values through manipulation of the local media, stressing that the Nigerian media is not people-oriented, but rather government dominated. This study sought to prove through content-analysis the level of commitment of media in promoting and integrating traditional folk media into the modern media technology. First, the content of two newspapers, for example, "Daily Time" published in English and "Gbóungboun" published in Yotuba Language. The research method of "Directional Relation Analysis" was applied. The aim of the study was to find out if the audience of either newspaper is getting a balanced information about the political and socio-economic situation in the country. A major problem is the inability to have a socially accepted language of wider communication. The report discusses how the media in Nigeria was largely influenced by the two factors: missionary activities and colonial administration. These two factors changed the pattern of information dissemination but failed to create a people-oriented communication system. A more ethnic- and people-oriented media is recommended to foster a feeling of collective participation in government, beginning in the rural areas and especially using radio as the community communication medium. Local Nigerian media should be restructured to reflect the socio-cultural dimension of the country; its people; and their culture, language, and education. Media in indigenous languages epitomizes a people-oriented communication approach to programs of national development and the preservation of socio-cultural values, ensuring in the process cultural self-determination. (Contains 17 references.) (NAV)

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THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES (CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA)

Dr. Olatunji Isola Ogunyemi

ED 389 164

INTRODUCTION: In recent times there has been an increasing wave of cultural revival all over the world. The countries of Eastern Europe, for example, where there has been almost a transformation of heterogenous society into homogenous entity were most affected. Africa was not left behind in this renaissance of cultural nationalism. In fact , since attaining independence, cultural nationalism which was in the fore-front of political struggle reverted to a passive position in most African countries. But in 1970s, a new threat to cultural self determination of these countries was identified. This threat was perceived in the activities of Transnational Corporations, i.e., UPI, REUTERS e.t.c. and in the globalization of communication through direct satellite broadcasting.

African countries called this tendency cultural imperialism which must be fought with all the resources at their disposal. This prompted them to translate the ideas of establishing Pan African News Agency into reality in 1979. Furthermore, they appealed to United Nations to regulate the activities of Transnational Corporations and formulate a New World Information Order(NWIO) that will ensure a balance flow of information between the North and the South and more so, ensure their participation in cultural exchange between nations.

In recognition of the threat posed to national culture by foreign cultural values through the media, the Director-General of UNESCO remarked at a Unesco Conference on Cultural Policies in Bogota in 1978 that, " the mass media that have become one of the basic supports of cultural dissemination transmit messages that are not culturally neutral. They reflect the thinking, the ideas, the values, in short, the vision of the world of those who use them. When they serve as the

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channel for transmitting to a given region value systems or ways of life which are foreign to the peoples of that region, they cannot be prevented in the end from wiping out the specific values of those peoples, thus becoming, even if unintentionally, instruments of cultural alienation".

This concept of the role and the effect of media disregarded and disproved the generally perceived concept that media plays only information, entertainment and education roles in the society. It goes further to show that communication policy and national cultural policy are interrelated. To what extent this connection was made in Nigeria is the cardinal point of this thesis.

ROLE OF MEDIA : The role of media per se has not changed since ancient times. Media still fulfills the "Watchman Role, i.e., to scan the horizon and report back; Policy Role,i.e., to decide policy, to lead and to legislate; and the Teacher Role,i.e., to socialize the new members by teaching them the beliefs, customs, and laws valued by the society". What has changed in the communication process in modern times is the introduction of new media technology. The effects of media technology has made communication scholars perceive that TV,for instance, is not just a box that brings information to our homes but a transmitter of culture, and its use in any country is culturally induced.

In Nigeria, for instance, one of the modes of communication is "Towncrier" . And the communication process in this traditonal setting would look like this:

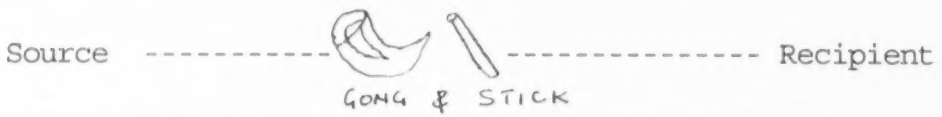

Fig.1. Towncrier type communication process in African traditional society.

This communication process is very effective because of its cultural disposition. For instance, the Towncrier(source) through the medium(gong) is able to communicate with the recipient. The source and the recipient in this case share two things in common. First, the recognition of the symbol of communication i.e. Gong. Second, the socially accepted language of wider communication, which in the South/West Nigeria, for instance, is Yoruba. This sort of social experience between the source and the recipient is very vital to effective communication. Therefore, the key to effective and people oriented communication is sharing of a common social experience.

In modern times, African countries have departed from this mode of communication, at least in the urban centers, due largely to the influence of colonization. This change was not necessitated by the ineffectiveness of traditional mode of communication but by its inadequacy in terms of reach and immediacy in an increasingly urbanized areas. Therefore, this sort of communication process resulted :

Source---------- Media e.g.Newspapers---------- Recipient
Electronic media.

Fig.2. Modern communication process.

The introduction of media technology necessitated a change in the awareness of African people. That is, they must recognize this media technology as the symbol of communication for them to share a common social experience with the source. Since the pre-independence era, African people have come to leave with and accept new media technology , leading to a full integration of this technology into the communication process of their society.

The only hindrance to a full sharing of common social experience with the recipient in most African countries is the inability to have a socially accepted language of wider communication. Efforts by colonial administration to solve this

problem by imposing foreign language have proved ineffective. Colonial language policy has only succeeded to create a new class of elite who have privileged access to information. Furthermore, post-independence administrations in African countries have been unable to tackle this problem due to its political and ethnocultural intonation. Consequently, media in these countries has not been playing the role of a unifying factor. In formulating their communication policy, the same mistakes have been made continually, i.e., using media as a vehicle for transmitting foreign language and cultural values. In addressing this problem, media, in a polyglot society, should play the role of both a unifying factor and agent for the creation of inter-ethnic understanding.

EVOLUTION OF MEDIA IN NIGERIA : The evolution of media in Nigeria was largely influenced by two factors : missionary activities and colonial administration. These two factors changed the pattern of information dissemination but failed to create a people oriented communication system. The first mass medium was established by the missionaries in 1859, Abeokuta, South western Nigeria. Though the objective of the newspaper called "Iwe-Irohin" was to propagate christianity, its establishment was a milestone because it used the socially accepted language of wider communication of the region, i.e. Yoruba. But the social gains of publishing in the local language was not consolidated as other factors took precedent in the establishment of media in the country.

Another factor, that stimulated the growth of media in pre-independence era is the imposition of colonial administration after the Berlin Conference in 1884/85, where Africa was divided between leading European countries. The culmination of this imperial move was the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914. The move was precipitated by economic and political interests of the colonialists without any consideration of the social effects. As a result, the composition

of Nigeria was made up of 250 ethnic groups. Three major groups i.e. Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo with a long history of socio-political organizations continue to play major role in the sway of political and economic development of Nigeria. Meanwhile, in pre-independence era, more newspapers were established by the educated few for political reasons. They saw the medium as effective organ in their nationalist struggle. For example, newspapers like Lagos Daily News(1927) by Herbert Macaulay and Dr J.Akilade Caulcrick; and West African Pilot(1937) by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe became popular for there nationalist fervor.

Nationalist struggle coupled with colonial language and education policy prevented the evolution of a people-oriented media in Nigeria. The new media was seen by the majority illiterate as an organ of the elite. In fact, its concentration in the hands of the elite and adoption of a foreign language as a medium of communication intensified the gulf between the literate and the illiterate segments of the society. This was the political and social condition in which newspaper grew in pre-independent Nigeria. This situation did not change much when Radio was established by the colonial government in 1932. Its introduction was not necessitated by the urge to satisfy the information need of the people but by such motive as : "a powerful propaganda machinery for the British as well as providing a source of information about Britain and the wider world". Once again the aim behind the establishment of media was not to integrate traditional mode of communication into the new information technology.

Post-independent Nigerian government in 1960s was too preoccupied with struggle for political authority than to create a conducive political and social situation for the establishment of people oriented media. Consequently, media was burdened with colonial heritage coupled with other new factors that played a decisive role in the growth of media in the country. These factors are political interests, information monopoly and audience categorization. They shaped the structure and the

content of post independent media in Nigeria. Furthermore, they are impediments to the development of media in indigenous languages and to the use of media as a vehicle for the promotion of the nations cultural dimension.

This was the political climate when Television was established in 1959. Western Nigeria Television(WNTV) as it was called then was a product of political antagonism between the Western Regional Government under "Action Group" political party of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Federal Colonial Government under Governor Macpherson. The event that led to the establishment of broadcast station at the regional level started in 1956 when Chief Anthony Enahoro(an Action Group member of the House of Representative) moved a motion for "Self-government". Governor Macpherson was forced to accuse the party of perfidy on the Radio but when the Leader of the party requested for airtime to state his own side of the story, he was denied access.

The perceived power of the electronic media intensified its concentration in the hands of Federal and State Governments. Consequently, they became instruments of political assassination and partisanship was very common among media practitioners. In 1960s such situation was prevalent, for example, "the Head of News became virtually a law unto himself because he was a supporter of the Government of the day and could be trusted to do their bidding. There was frequent Government intervention; WNTV was often ordered at short notice to put out some news or other announcement which the Government of the day desired to beam to the people".

The newspaper ownership pattern was more liberal as private ownership was allowed. But the owners of this medium are more interested in the political and economic gains rather than the watchdog role their newspapers were supposed to play. Such were the motives in the First Republic(1960-1966). And the Second Republic (1979-1983) witnessed an even vigorous renewal of these motives. Newspapers like, "Concord" by Chief Abiola and "Guardian" by business tycoon Alex Ibru were established at this

time.

Despite this sordid state of political situation which precipitated the growth of media in Nigeria, government has always been expressing its willingness to use media to promote the people's culture in the country. This commitment led to the organization of National Communication Policy Seminar in Lagos in 1987 by General Ibrahim Babangida's regime. In its report, the seminar suggested : " the establishment of community viewing centers in every one of the nation's 97,000 communities, as a means of nurturing a television consumption culture in the rural areas, and preparing the grounds for future establishment of television stations in these areas. While federal and state radio and television stations may continue to originate their programs from their current urban centers, efforts should be made to integrate their structures with those of the traditional rural media".

This recommendation led broadcasting stations to increase the percentage of indigenous language programs they broadcast. But efforts by media to promote and reflect the people's culture is haphazard and uncoordinated because they are not oriented towards this function. There concentration in the urban areas has tuned them towards satisfaction of information interest and taste of the elite. Furthermore, lack of production expertise in adapting folk media i.e. folk theater, drama, story-telling,e.t.c. to modern media hindered a wide-scale production of indigenous language programs.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH : it is pertinent to prove through content analysis the level of commitment of media in promoting and integrating traditional folk media into the modern media technology. Furthermore, the analysis will depict if the media elitist orientation has changed to people oriented . In 1992, the former Minister of Education, Prof. Fafunwa, stated that 53 million Nigerians are illiterate. This means that 61 per cent Nigerians are illiterate judging by 1991 censors

figure which puts Nigeria's population at 88.5 million. This category of people have a right to political participation and to know what the elitist government is doing on their behalf.

The analytical framework is on two levels. First, the content of two newspapers, for example, "Daily Time" which publishes in English Language(one of the 97 newspapers and magazines published in English Language) and "Gboungboun" which publishes in Yoruba Language(one of the 18 newspapers and magazines published in the three major Nigerian indigenous languages i.e. Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo), was analyzed. The research method applied is "Directional Relation Analysis". This method allowed this researcher to categorize issues into "Isolate", "Prominent", and "Contextual". The issues chosen for analysis are government launched programs to boost national development. For example, Structural Adjustment Programs(SAP), Social Democratic Party/National Republic Convention(SDP/NRC), Better Life Program(BLP), and Mass Mobilization for Social Justice,Self-Reliance and Economic Recovery(MAMSER). The period of study is five years(1989-1993).

The aim of this study is to find out if the audience of either newspaper is getting a balanced information about the political and socio-economic situation in the country. Furthermore, it will depict if both newspapers are agenda setters.

The region chosen for analysis is South Western Nigeria and the indigenous language spoken here is Yoruba. This area was chosen for analysis because it is the media center of Nigeria and it is accorded the status of "educational advantaged area". The tables below depict the findings of the analysis.

CATEGORY	ISOLATE	PROMINENT	CONTEXTUAL
SAP	38.46	23.08	38.46
SDP/NRC	52.63	23.58	23.68
BLP	40.	26.67	33.33
MAMSER	36.36	18.18	45.45

Source: Author's Analysis.
Fig. 1. REFLECTION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES IN "GBOUNGBOUN" NEWSPAPER

CATEGORY	ISOLATE	PROMINENT	CONTEXTUAL
SAP	44.	32.	24
SDP/NRC	46.55	32.76	20.69
BLP	41.67	33.33	25.
MAMSER	38.46	26.92	34.62

Source: Author's Analysis.
Fig. 2. REFLECTION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES IN "DAILY TIMES" NEWSPAPER.

From the above analysis it is obvious that "DTN" is authoritative in the way it treats all the issues. Its percentage of "isolate" and "prominent" is more than "Gboungboun's", which shows that it is an opinion leader as well as agenda setter. Since both newspapers compete for readership among the literate, it is not surprising why preference is given to "DTN". Furthermore, the definition of literacy in Nigeria means ability to read and write in English Language. This affects fluency of literate people in their own mother-tongue and since they can hardly read or comprehend well in their own language, they tend to ignore

newspapers in indigenous languages. Therefore, the establishment of newspapers in indigenous language by the government is a mere political propaganda. Newspapers in indigenous languages will enjoy popularity and command respect only when the constitutional status of these languages are elevated. At the moment, they are doomed to play a minimal role in raising political awareness of their readers and in promoting indigenous languages.

Since broadcast media is enjoying popularity in Nigeria, it is pertinent to analyze there role in promoting indigenous languages. Since 1959, when the first Television station was established in Nigeria, which incidentally is the first in Africa, there has been a proliferation of electronic media in the country. Presently, there are 38 TV stations in Nigeria. The Federal Government established Nigerian Television Authority owns 24 Stations in different capital cities and operates on "VHF". The other 14 Stations, which operates on "UHF", were established by various State Governments during the Second Republic between 1980 and 1983. This period witnessed the highest growth of TV Stations in Nigeria and the objective behind it was political.

Television boom of 1980s puts Nigeria above the specified "UNESCO Minima" of two Tv sets per 100 inhabitants. For example, in 1977, Nigeria with an estimated population of 66,174,000 has 90,000 Tv sets which equals one Tv set per one thousand inhabitants. But by 1983, a Tv survey shows that Nigeria has 5,000,000 Tv sets which equals 75 Tv sets per one thousand inhabitants. This is a tremendous growth which shows that Tv is accorded the recognition of a symbol of communication. Therefore, Tv has cut across the illiteracy barrier as it appeals to both categories. This was confirmed by the UNESCO survey in 1954 which found that "Tv enjoys a particular marked success among children, illiterate adults and poorer families". To what extent Nigeria is using Tv to reach this category of people, who are the

majority group, is the objective of this analysis of Tv content.

In collecting data for this analysis, Nigeria was stratified along the government zonal broadcast coverage. There are six zonal groups in Nigeria. Zone A which is chosen for this analysis is located in the South Western Nigeria and the dominant indigenous language spoken here is Yoruba. Within a five year period(1989-1993), the programs of two Television Stations, "NTA" owned by the Federal Government and Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State(BCOS) owned by Oyo State Government, were analyzed. The method adopted is quantitative analysis which permits this researcher to find the proportion of media programs broadcast in Yoruba Language, in English Language and the proportion of imported programs. It is pertinent to mention that since 1970s the proportion of imported programs has dropped sharply. Therefore, most of the programs in English Language are locally produced.

CATEGORY	**GENERAL PERCENTAGE OUTPUT**
Indigenous programs in Yoruba Language	29.53
Indigenous programs in English Language	57.18
Imported programs	13.29

Source: Author's Analysis.

Fig.3. NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY(NTA,IBADAN).

CATEGORY	GENERAL PERCENTAGE OUTPUT
Indigenous programs in Yoruba Language	27.58
Indigenous programs in English Language	44.86
Imported programs	27.58

Source: Author's Analysis.
Fig. 4. BROADCASTING CORPORATION OF OYO STATE(BCOS,IBADAN).

From the above, it is obvious that programs in English Language take precedent over those in indigenous languages. This is not surprising considering the urban nature of the media. It is also clear that Tv is elitist and is yet to be adapted to portray the social context of the Nigeria society. Less airtime to indigenous language programs means less access to media and information by the majority group. Therefore, relative denial of information is a relative denial of political power. It is disturbing to note that Nigeria did not connect the problem of political and economic instability with the problem of inadequate and imbalance flow of information between the ruled and the ruler.

RECOMMENDATION/CONCLUSION : In the course of this thesis, it has been stressed that Nigerian media is not people-oriented. They act as an extension of government information machinery and when they are privately owned, economic and political interests supersede the role of the "watchdog" of the society. There is an urgent need to re-appraise the role of media in Nigeria and to restructure them so as to operate within the social context of the society.

I subscribe to the recommendation of the "National Communication Policy Seminar" that community viewing center should be established in rural areas. In addition, I will suggest that this should be ethnic oriented media. The peculiar ethnic situation in Nigeria demands the establishment of a 100 per cent ethnic media in order to reach the majority. This will encourage cultural exchange which will foster cultural understanding and bridge the information-gap between the literate and the illiterate.

As a starting stage, Radio could serve the purpose of a community media because it is cheap, affordable and can be financed by the community. This will reduce government financial burden and curb urban migration especially among the youth as it will create and promote jobs. Ethnic media is indispensable if the government is committed to build a virile democracy as ideas generated at this level could be used when formulating national policies.

Contrary to what some people might think, ethnic media will not lead to segregation or demand for secession. It would rather foster a feeling of collective participation in government. Furthermore, the protagonists of indigenous languages in Nigeria advanced these benefits to buttress their point: "that it will fasten Nigerian unity. That it will aid national planning and enhance national pride. That it will enhance competence in officialese. That it will serve numerous other instrumental functions like the promotion of socio-economic and cultural

activities". Judging by the incessant political and economic instability in the country, one can only comment that the way forward is through the elevation and promotion of indigenous languages in the media.

Some third world countries have taken steps to promote indigenous languages in the media. For example, Indonesia launched a "Palapa Satellite" in 1976 to broadcast to rural regions in indigenous language(Bahasa). The success and the benefit of the project was confirmed in the report of Dr Godwin Chu of East/West Center in Honolulu,USA, after a six year survey. Dr Chu claimed that the project contributed to reading and speaking of national language, and fostered national integration.

The media should be restructured so as to deeply reflect the socio-cultural dimension of the country. For instance, government monopoly on broadcast media should be eliminated and the control should be transferred to non-governmental organization. This will improve the image of the media and make them reflect people's opinion. In this regard, I suggest that Nigerian Television Authority be replaced by a new independent body which could be called "Federal Media Commission". The functions of "FMC" would range from frequency allocation to encouraging creativity among local artists and research into traditional culture and folk media.

It is pertinent to state that changes in the orientation of media cannot be executed in isolation of other social factors. In Nigeria, language and education policies hinder a cultural approach to communication. Therefore, changes in communication policy should be done with a commensurate change in these policies. Such changes will stimulate collective objective which will act as catalyst to rural education. Rural communication is an integral part of rural education, i.e. adult education program, which if properly coordinated will hasten the process of increasing people's political awareness and eradicating illiteracy.

Finally, media in indigenous languages epitomizes a people-oriented communication approach to programs of national development and the preservation of socio-cultural values, ensuring in the process cultural self-determination. Definitely, Nigeria, as the most populous black nation, has an obligation to promote african culture and civilization. Therefore, a re-orientation of its media towards this trend will spur changes in the orientation of media in African countries.

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